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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/777,757	02/13/2004	Frits Franciscus Carolus Groot	248775US6	5330

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EXAMINER

JOERGER, KAITLIN S

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3653

DATE MAILED: 08/15/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/777,757

Applicant(s)

GROOT ET AL.

Examiner

Kaitlin S. Joerger

Art Unit

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 26 May 2006.
2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-28 is/are pending in the application.
4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-3, 6-13, 16-25 and 28 is/are rejected.
7) ☒ Claim(s) 4, 5, 14, 15, 26 and 27 is/are objected to.
8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 13 February 2004 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 1-3, 6-11, 16-18, 24, and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Abilgaard et al. (U.S. Patent 6,712,194).

Regarding claim 1, Abilgaard et al. teaches a device for sorting products, comprising: a plurality of supporting units adjacently arranged along a conveying path, each supporting unit including a conveying element configured to move along a guide extending according to the conveying path and at least one load carrying platform comprising a supporting surface for supporting a product, a support member supporting the supporting surface, and a tilting mechanism configured to tilt the supporting surface about an axis of tilt parallel to the conveying path with respect to the conveying element, see column 10, lines 23+ and figures 1-5. The tilting mechanism comprises a drive device and at least one cam, 2, configured to be rotated by the drive device about an axis of rotation extending parallel to the axis of tilt when the cam moves over a camway, 1, so as to cause the support member to tilt about the axis of tilt between a neutral position and an extreme position, the drive device is positioned apart from the cam, see figures 1-5.

Regarding claims 2 and 3, the support member comprises the camway and the camway extends substantially in a radial direction with respect to the axis of tilt, see figure 1.

Regarding claims 6-11, the tilting mechanism is configured to cause the support member to tilt between the neutral position and the extreme position through rotation through 180 degrees or more of the cam about the axis of rotation, see column 13, lines 47+. The angle of tilt of the support member between the neutral position and the extreme position ranges between 30 and 60 degrees. The tilting mechanism comprises two cams, see figure 7, which are jointly rotatable about the axis of rotation, during which rotation on one side of the neutral position, one of the cams moves over one of the two camways, and during rotation on the other side of neutral position, the other one of the cams moves over the other one of the two camways. The camways define a V-shape, see figure 20, the V-shape comprises an angle ranging from 30 to 60 degrees. The drive device comprises an electric motor for each supporting surface.

Regarding claims 16-18, Abilgaard et al. further teaches a supporting surface provided with supporting edges extending perpendicularly to the axis of tilt, see figure 1. The height of the supporting edge decreases from a halfway point of the edge towards the ends thereof. The height of the supporting edges equals zero at the ends thereof, see figure 1.

Regarding claim 24, the reference teaches a sorting device further comprising a control device configured to simultaneously activate the tilting mechanism associated with at least two adjacent supporting units during joint support of the product by the respective surfaces, see column 11, lines 5+.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

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(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 12-15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Abildgaard et al. in view of Polling (U. S. Patent No. 6,135,262).

Abildgaard et al. teaches all of the features of the claimed invention except that the load carrying platforms if adjacent supporting units abut against each other. Polling, however, does teach this feature. Polling teaches a sorting conveyor wherein the load carrying platforms, 1, abut against each other, see figure 1a, each supporting surface, 3, comprising upper sides of a supporting element and of a bridging element, 4, which overlaps the supporting element at a first end thereof and which is movable in a direction parallel to the supporting surface with respect to the supporting element so as to retain mutual abutment of adjacent load carrying platforms through a curved section. The bridging element is movable in two degrees of freedom with respect to the supporting element, see figures 3 and 6.

Claims 19-23 and 28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Abildgaard et al.

Regarding claim 19, Abildgaard et al. discloses the claimed invention except for the height of the supporting edges is at least 6mm, more preferably at least 8mm, at least at a position halfway the length of the supporting edges. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to set the height of the supporting edge to at least 6mm and more preferably 8mm for the purpose of ensuring that the items conveyed on the supporting surface do not slide off the edge during conveyance, since it has

been held that discovering an optimum values of a result effective variable involves only routine skill in the art. *In re Boesch*, 617 F.2d 272, 205 USPQ 215 (CCPA 1980).

Regarding claims 20 and 28, Abildgaard et al. discloses the claimed invention except for the radius of the upper sides of the supporting edges is maximally 8mm or maximally 6mm, at least at a position halfway the length of the supporting edges. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to set the radius of the upper sides of the supporting edges to maximally 8mm or maximally 6mm for the purpose of ensuring that the items conveyed on the supporting surface do not slide off the edge during conveyance, since it has been held that discovering an optimum values of a result effective variable involves only routine skill in the art. *In re Boesch*, 617 F.2d 272, 205 USPQ 215 (CCPA 1980).

Regarding claim 21, Abildgaard et al. discloses the claimed invention except for the spacing between two adjacent supporting edges is between 10mm and 80mm. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to set the spacing between two adjacent supporting edges is between 10mm and 80mm for the purpose of ensuring that the adjacent supporting surfaces have enough room to maneuver with respect to each other when the conveyor travels around curves, since it has been held that discovering an optimum values of a result effective variable involves only routine skill in the art. *In re Boesch*, 617 F.2d 272, 205 USPQ 215 (CCPA 1980).

Regarding claims 22 and 23, Abildgaard et al. discloses the claimed invention except for the length of each supporting surface ranges between 300mm and 500mm or 500mm and 700mm. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to set the length of each supporting surface ranges between 300mm and 500mm or

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500mm and 700mm for the purpose of ensuring that the supporting surface are properly sized to fit the majority of items traveling on the sorting conveyor, since it has been held that discovering an optimum values of a result effective variable involves only routine skill in the art. *In re Boesch*, 617 F.2d 272, 205 USPQ 215 (CCPA 1980).

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 4,5, 14, 15, 26, and 27 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Regarding claims 4, 5, 26, and 27, the following is a statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter: Abildgaard et al. is considered to be the most relevant prior art. The reference teaches all of the features of the claimed invention except for an angle between the connecting lines between the axis of rotation and the cam and the axis of tilt. Adilgaard et al. teaches that the axis of tilt and the axis of rotation are in line with each other, therefore there is no angle between the axis and the line connected to the cam.

Regarding claims 14 and 15, the following is a statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter: The combination of Abildegaard et al. and Polling is considered to be the most relevant prior art. However, neither Abildgaard et al. nor Polling teach the specific connection means between adjacent supporting units as claimed in claims 14 and 15.

Conclusion

THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Kaitlin S. Joerger whose telephone number is 571-272-6938. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday 9-5.


If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Patrick Mackey can be reached on 571-272-6916. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

ksj


10 August 2006


PATRICK MACKEY
PRIMARY EXAMINER